

THE CRC NEWSLETTER

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCILS

Promoting harmony & respect among a diverse citizenry of our state



South Carolina Human Affairs Commission
www.schac.sc.gov

Volume III, Issue 6 * June 2018

Interview with Dr. Hamilton, the First Commissioner of the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission



pictured are: Tabatha Wilson, Dr. George Hamilton, and Saundra Ligon

In 1972, Dr. George Hamilton was appointed as the First Commissioner to the SC Human Affairs Commission State Agency. Hamilton was the first black in almost 100 years to head a South Carolina state agency. Saundra Ligon, Senior Community Relations Consultant in the Community Relations Department at SCHAC and Deputy Commissioner, Danny Koon, traveled to meet with Dr. Hamilton and his secretary, Tabatha Wilson this past May 2018. Ligon and Koon conducted an interview with Dr. Hamilton to inquire of past memories and experiences from Dr. Hamilton during his time with the agency. Please take time to read and enjoy the brief interview below.

Q: What was your involvement in the establishment of the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission?

A: Dr. Hamilton was already working with the Governor's office due to his work with the Community Action Agency, and other civil rights work. Governor appointed Dr. Hamilton to head the Agency and he became the first Commissioner of the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission (SCHAC). He chose Dr. Hamilton because he had confidence that he would be the best person to get the job done. Dr. Hamilton's wasn't with the Agency long, which was how he wanted it because he had never planned for it to be a long term position; he wasn't looking for a career this was his "mission."



continued from page 1

Q: How did Father Murphy become the first Deputy Commissioner?

A: Father Murphy was not only his best friend but also the chairman of the Community Action Agency. Father Murphy received no salary because he was unable to accept one as a priest. Funding was provided to the Catholic Church who then in turn took care of him. Dr. Hamilton stated that, "Father Murphy was an excellent Deputy Commissioner." Dr. Hamilton is still friends with Father Murphy to this day and will be visiting him in Washington DC this month.

In a Charlotte Observer article dated Sun. Feb 4, 1973, Father Murphy was described as, "Louis Murphy, a catholic priest who wears a business suit instead of a collar and serves as Hamilton's deputy director." And in that same article Summerville superintendent Charles DuBose is quoted as saying of Mr. Hamilton, "He is really is an asset to our state."

Q: What was the SCHAC mission in the beginning?

A: End segregation: "At first to get (minority) people jobs, but in order to get jobs you had to be trained. However, once we got them trained they still weren't getting the jobs due to discrimination." This was very disheartening to those who were trying to make a difference. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave people of color rights, but even with good training and support, they now faced discrimination finding employment.

Dr. Hamilton observed that there were no black National Guardsmen and only very few minorities represented in law enforcement at the time the commission began. This led to what Dr. Hamilton says was one of the greatest successes of his time at SCHAC, being able to work with these agencies and get Affirmative Action Plans in place in order to provide equal employment opportunities for all South Carolinians.

The Agency was given enforcement power from Governor John C. West for State, County and City agencies. The S.C. Human Affairs Law was enacted in 1972. Staff: 0 to about 13 staff members in one year.

Q: How do you think people's attitudes have changed from 1972 till now?

A: Dr. Hamilton said that people's attitudes are much better than they were in 1972, but we haven't solved all the problems yet, we still have institutional racism today. Dr. Hamilton said, "You can legislate laws but you can't legislate attitudes."

Q: What was one of the major accomplishment during your time as Commissioner?

A: The writing and acceptance of the Affirmative Action Plan. It was accepted by 90% of the General Assembly and within 1 year time the agency was able to report positive statistical changes in the Annual Report.

STATE HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION

GEORGE D. HAMILTON
Commissioner

Post Office Drawer 11528
Columbis, S. C. 29211
November 9, 1978

The State Human Affairs Commission submits its first annual report in the hope that public officials and interested citizens throughout the State of South Carolina can be made aware of the outstanding and notable progress that has been made by South Carolina in the field of equal employment opportunity and equal treatment of all its citizens without regard to race, sex, religion, age, or national origin.

Since June, we have requested and received Affirmative Action Plans from all agencies of State Government with ten or more employees, which is an outstanding achievement for this new agency and for the State of South Carolina which leads the Southeast in this area. These plans will assure equality of treatment for all South Carolinians and as such are a tribute to the Governor and the General Assembly.

/s/ GEORGE D. HAMILTON
Commissioner



Promoting harmony & respect among a diverse citizenry of our state Community Relations Councils

1026 Sumter Street, Suite 101
Columbia, SC 29201
T: (803)737-7800
F: (803)253-4191
W: www.schac.sc.gov

Current CRCs:

Columbia, West Columbia, Lee, Allendale, Hampton, Beaufort, Jasper, Berkeley, Myrtle Beach, Georgetown, Lancaster, Rock Hill, Greenwood, Greenville, Anderson, Laurens, McCormick, Aiken

continued from page 2

Q: What were some of your biggest obstacles during your time as Commissioner?

A: Communicating the objective of the organization and seeking cooperation. It was important to be diplomatic and not alienate people; we needed their support to be successful.

Most memorable moment:

Dr. Hamilton and Father Murphy locked up! A lady had filed a complaint for discrimination on the job and as Dr. Hamilton and Father Murphy were sitting on the lady's front porch meeting with her about her complaint, the police pulled up and arrested them for 'instigating' racial problems within the community. Dr. Hamilton tried to explain who they were and that they weren't trying to instigate any problems but rather solve one. Later that day while the two were sitting in jail someone came to them and apologized for not being able to help them but they had overheard that someone was planning to hurt them that night. Eventually they were given the opportunity to make a phone call and the governor directed SLED agents to get them out and they were released later that same day.



Annual Event Calendar for COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCILS

- January**
MLK/Interfaith Awareness
- February**
African American History
- March**
Women's History/End Racism Day
- April**
Fair Housing
- May**
Law Enforcement/
Community Relations
- June**
Disaster Preparedness/Emanuel 9
Remembrance Day, Peace & Reconciliation
- July**
Employment Discrimination/
Economic Opportunity
- August**
Youth Project/Back to School
- September**
Hispanic Heritage/
Cultural Diversity
- October**
Disability Employment Awareness
- November**
American Indian Heritage/
Veterans' Appreciation
- December**
Aging & Poverty Issues